

THE BIBLE INITIATIVE



GENESIS-JOSHUA

We believe God is the greatest thing in the universe. His Son, Jesus, is the greatest human to have ever lived. The story of Him saving humanity from sin is the greatest truth the world has ever known. There is only one place to find that story: the Bible -- a book that most acknowledge is important, but far fewer truly engage with.

It is from this place that The Bible Initiative was brought to life. We have a desire to see God's people know God's story, to be fueled by faith in God's Son, and to expand God's Kingdom for His glory. What you're holding is a tool, a resource, to be used alongside God's Word, not to replace God's Word. Our longing is that The Bible Initiative would aid you in reading, studying, knowing, and being changed by the Bible.

We are praying that five things would happen through The Bible Initiative.

1) That God would speak. There is no substitute for the Word of God; He has spoken through Scripture. By meeting Him there, you allow Him the space to speak timeless truth to your heart.

2) That God would transform your heart and life into the image of Jesus. If you come before Scripture humbly, you allow the Holy Spirit room to move you into greater obedience to God.

3) That God would inform your mind of His truth. In the Bible, God has given you everything you need for life, salvation, and holy living.

4) That God would create in you a hunger for Him and His word. We pray that this year in Scripture will not be the end of your engagement with the Bible, but the beginning.

5) That God would lead you to worship. We pray that as you see the magnificence of God and His work to save humanity from sin, you will be left in awe of Him, longing to do nothing more than worship Him with all your life for the remainder of your life.

Inside this book, you will find a reading plan with five days of reading for each week, a brief explanation of that week's section of Scripture, a family devotional and activity, and individual or small group discussion questions. Each of these is designed to aid you and your family in reading, understanding, and applying the truth of the Bible to your everyday life.

-TIM FRITSON

OUR PRAYER IS THAT:

The Word of God would

SPEAK

LOUDER THAN ANY OTHER VOICE

TRANSFORM

OUR HEARTS INTO THE IMAGE OF JESUS

INFORM

OUR MINDS OF THE TRUTH OF SCRIPTURE

CREATE HUNGER

FOR MORE OF GOD AND HIS WORD

LEAD TO WORSHIP

IN AWE OF THE MAJESTY OF GOD

DAILY DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

These questions are a tool to help small groups or individuals engage with Scripture on a daily basis. We hope that utilizing these questions will help you better understand the Bible. We do not want you to simply talk about the Bible; we want you to understand Scripture and know how to apply it to your lives.

1. What does this passage say? Where does this passage take place within the Bible's overall story?

Summarize the main point of the passage as succinctly as possible.

2. What does this passage mean to its original audience?

Understand the context of the passage by discerning the author's intent for its original audience. Often this may require consulting other study tools or cross-referencing other Biblical passages.

3. What does this passage tell us about God?

Discover what the text tells us about the character of God. Does it say anything about His work through the life and death of Jesus Christ?

4. What does this passage tell us about humanity? What does the text reveal about sin and humanity's need for the gospel?

Analyze the text to see what it reveals about humanity. This question should lead to reflection and self-examination.

5. What does this passage demand of me?

Apply the passage to daily life. Hopefully the first four questions help you gain an understanding of the meaning of the text. Now you are positioned to correctly apply its meaning.

6. How does this passage change the way I relate to people?

Apply the passage to your relationships with others. We want to encourage discussion on how the text shapes both how you relate to other believers and how you "live on mission" in the world.

7. How does this passage prompt me to pray?

Pray. At our core we want to root our prayers in the Word of God. Hopefully, the previous six questions spark passionate prayer in the lives of believers – both in sanctification and in mission to reach the lost. Seek to walk away from each reading with an action step in mind.

FAMILY ENGAGEMENT

"For the Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword." (Hebrews 4:12) This incredible promise is the foundation of our Bible Initiative Family Devotionals. It is our desire that as you read these words together, your hearts and lives will be changed to be more like Jesus.

The Bible tells parents that it is our privilege and responsibility to pass on to our children a living faith in God the Father, through Jesus Christ. How can you do this in the most effective way possible? On the following page you will find the "Family Soup Recipe." It contains eleven different family ingredients to help make passing the baton of faith as easy as possible for your children to receive, helping them take off and grow in their own life of faith. Be intentional with these ingredients, so they grow strong in your home.

There is a family devotional each week based on one of the eleven ingredients. To prepare:

- 1. Read over the Bible passage and the family ingredient.** This will help you prepare to share the Bible story. Tell the story in the simplest and most effective way, based on your child's age.
- 2. Read over the questions and activities.** Decide which will work best for your child and gather simple supplies, if needed.
- 3. Share the story, discuss the questions and do the activity.**

It is that simple. Make it short, intentional, and fun. Enjoy, and let the Bible do its work in your hearts.

YouVersion Bible For Kids App

The Kids App is appropriate for toddlers-5th grade

To go along with The Bible Initiative, you can download an additional resource, the YouVersion Bible For Kids App. Throughout the book, weeks with a corresponding video will be marked with a box labeled "Kids App." This is a fun resource for kids because as they watch they can interact with the video by touching the screen. We pray this is helpful as you and your family walk through The Bible Initiative.

Parents, your home is like a bowl of soup. Within the base of the soup are many different ingredients. Each ingredient brings something that no other ingredient can bring. Without any of the needed ingredients, the flavor of the soup will be lacking. Our home “family soup recipe” needs these specific, healthy ingredients to foster the greatest potential for each of our children to know and grow in relationship to God the Father through Christ. This is our chosen recipe as seen in the life of Christ on earth.

FAMILY SOUP RECIPE

- STORYTELLING
- KNOWING GOD
- IDENTITY
- LOVE & RESPECT
- WORSHIP, THANKSGIVING, & JOY
- FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS
- RESPONSIBILITY
- SERVICE
- OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE LIVING
- COURSE CORRECTION
- MODELING

1. STORYTELLING

Children love stories. This sweet ingredient highlights the truth of God’s Word and the way God has been moving throughout history to bring redemption, salvation, and hope through Christ. God is clearly the Hero and He invites us, as His supporting cast, to live our unique part of the story for His glory.

2. KNOWING GOD

God is holy, mighty, awesome, and does not change! The ingredient of knowing God creates the meatiness of our soup. As we as parents uphold and display God’s character, we give our children a rock-solid foundation to stand upon, no matter the circumstances or claims of others.

3. IDENTITY

This tender yet fibrous ingredient adds the flavor of knowing, “What does God think and say about me?” He knit us together perfectly and knows all about us. He loves us. Wherever we are, He is there (Ps. 139). Furthermore once we give our life to Christ as Savior and Lord, we have been chosen, adopted, redeemed, and given an inheritance in Christ (Eph. 1), all of which we did nothing to earn. These truths allow children to stand firm against the destructive counter identities the world will throw at them.

4. LOVE & RESPECT

This fundamental ingredient regulates the warmth of the home. Children need love and respect to flourish. Children are to honor and obey; parents are commanded not to provoke (Eph.6:1-4). The Father lovingly sanctifies us. Parents should do likewise. Love and acceptance should never be withheld due to a child’s disobedience.

5. WORSHIP, THANKSGIVING, & JOY

This fragrant flavor can permeate our home. Worship puts our focus on our Creator and Redeemer. We do not have to be in control. A cheerful heart is good medicine (Prov.17:22). Praise and thanksgiving lead us into an awareness of God's presence (Ps.100:4). There is no more secure or delightful place to dwell.

6. FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS

Being a consistent part of a local church is a rich ingredient that we can give to our children. God designed us to live in relationship and to experience Him in ways that can only happen in proximity with other believers. "Living life together" gives our kids, other adults and peers to stand beside them and encourage them throughout their walk with Christ.

7. RESPONSIBILITY

This hardy ingredient is essential for our homes to function well. It motivates each family member to do their part. Everyone must take ownership for one's life, commitments, gifts, and resources before God. Responsibility also extends outside the home to the church and nonbelievers.

8. SERVICE

This lowly ingredient is crucial for our world to see Christ in us. This heart posture asks the question, "What needs to be done?" It allows the Holy Spirit to cultivate sensitivity and focus on causes bigger than oneself. It is an antidote for the selfish viewpoint -- "It is all about ME." As Christ-followers, we are to view our lives as living sacrifices that we generously give away!

9. OUT OF THE COMFORT ZONE LIVING

This bold flavored ingredient encourages families to step out in faith. It creates a dependence on the Holy Spirit to equip and strengthen beyond natural abilities and desires. This crucial ingredient will cultivate a generation that, instead of seeking comfort, seeks a radical life of faith in Christ.

10. COURSE CORRECTION

This curative ingredient not only involves consequences, but additional restorative aspects of discipleship as well. It is not bitter; it is not given in anger or self-seeking. Biblical discipline includes: 1) An appropriate amount of pain or restriction, 2) Building up in love, 3) Repentance of sin to God and others, and 4) Discussion and prayer to stay on the corrected path -- all done with the 11core intent of healing and forward progress.

11. MODELING

This gleaming ingredient becomes more polished as we utilize it. What we say we believe is what we do in reality. Modeling spiritual characteristics and actions puts flesh on faith. When I see Christ in my parents, I see how to live like Him.

ADAPTED FROM MICHELLE ANTHONY'S, *Spiritual Parenting*

January 1-7

This Week:

THE IMPORTANCE OF THE BIBLE

As we begin our journey through the story of the Bible, we want to start with the importance of Scripture. Understanding the necessity of reading Scripture is paramount to developing the discipline of regularly and intentionally engaging in Bible reading. The Bible is God's revelation of Himself. Everything we need to know about the character and nature of God is contained within it. Most importantly, from beginning to end, the Bible is the story of God's redemptive work among humanity. The Bible is the story of a loving God creating humanity, humanity rebelling against God in sin, and God sending His Son in order to bring us back to Himself. The Bible is the most magnificent piece of literature, the greatest story ever written.

For that reason, we start with Psalm 119, the Bible's longest, most passionate description of itself. It is also the longest chapter of the Bible, which is reason we divided it into several readings throughout the week. Psalm 119 talks about a love for the words of God, running to them as the means of life - eternal life - in the midst of the brokenness of the world around us. "My soul clings to the dust; give me life according to your word!" (Psalm 119:25). This is our prayer for the coming year: may each of us grow in our love for the Bible. More importantly, may we each grow in our love for the Author. May we run to God's Word because it points us to the source of eternal life, Jesus Christ, the Savior.

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PSALM
119:1-40

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PSALM
119:41-72

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PSALM
119:73-104

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PSALM
119:105-144

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PSALM
119:145-176

KEY CONCEPT

INERRANCY:

SCRIPTURE IN
ITS ORIGINAL
WRITING,
PROPERLY
INTERPRETED,
WILL BE
SHOWN TO BE
WHOLLY TRUE

Family Devotional

Psalm 119:1-18

FAMILY INGREDIENT KNOWING GOD

Living in this world can sometimes feel like walking on a tightrope. It can be fun and exciting, yet scary, and sometimes even terrifying. Whatever our experiences, the Bible, God's Word, provides a light to keep us from stumbling. Jesus is the Living Word who is always beside us, never leaving us, and always ready to guide us in our next steps. Reading God's Word is the basis of the foundational ingredient called Knowing God. We can be assured that our relationship with God will deepen as we commit ourselves to reading His Word. He is worth it. The time and effort are worth it. "Taste and see that the Lord is good." Psalm 34:8

Family Questions

- What makes this book different from any other book?
- The word "blessed" in vs.1-2 could be thought of as "the good life" -- life as it is meant to be lived, in harmony with God and His purposes for us. What kind of person is described as "blessed" in these verses? Where can we find the guidance and help to live that kind of life?
- In verse 5, what does it mean to be steadfast?
- In verse 11, the writer shares a secret to keep us from sin. What is it?
- How can we "get God's Word into our heart?"
- According to verse 18, what should we ask God to do when we read the Bible?

Family Activity

Supplies: soft blanket(s), masking tape, glasses (cover lens with plastic wrap).

Activity 1: Say, "The Bible is a book that is different than any other book because God wrote it. Living life in obedience to the Bible draws us closer to Jesus." Have everyone wrap up in the blanket. Say, "This is how close Jesus wants to be with us. He loves us so much. The Bible tells us that."

Activity 2: Make a line on the floor with tape. Family Challenge: walk on the line without stepping off. (Older kids challenge - hop on one foot.) Try again, holding someone's hand. Which time was easier? Say, "If we want to live our steadfast lives, without falling, the Bible tells us how."

Activity 3: Put on "plastic wrap glasses." Try to read the first three words of Ps.119:18 with glasses and without. Discuss the verse. Say, "Why can we see more clearly when we read the Bible with our eyes wide open and ready?" Pray, asking God to open our eyes when we are reading the Bible so we can see and hear what He wants to show us.

Small Group Discussion

- Is there a principle to follow? -- A principle in the Bible is a timeless truth succinctly stated. It is a short, practical statement of truth drawn from a passage, used to guide our lives. Principles can cover broad statements of truth that universally apply to every situation we face. When we look at Psalm 119, there are many principles. As you look back at this week's reading, which principle was most meaningful to you?

January 8-14

This Week:

CREATION

Nothing. That is what exists at the beginning of the Bible. Nothing but God, that is. He has always existed; He is timeless. Into the nothingness, God speaks. The fullness and extent of His power are on display as light, continents, oceans, plants, and animals spring into existence at the sound of His voice. The pinnacle of all God creates is humanity, made in His image, to glorify Him, to live in relationship with Him, and to rule over and subdue the rest of His creation.

Of all the foundational realities we learn in the creation account, one of the most important is humanity's need for relationship. We were created to live in relationship -- with God and with other people. As God is creating, He declares each piece of His creation "good," until after creating Adam. He then says, "It is not good that the man should be alone" (Genesis 2:18). The need for relationship is part of who we are at our core. So God creates Eve, thus establishing the covenant of marriage. In the Garden of Eden, we also see that humanity lived in perfect relationship with God. He walked with Adam and Eve, spoke to and interacted with them. This is the way life was intended to be. That is the beauty of the Garden of Eden; we get a glimpse of the way God intended the world and humanity to function, unbroken by the effects of sin.

The creating power of God is not only described in Genesis 1-2. Throughout the Bible, there are references to God and His role as Creator. For this reason, we also include readings from Psalms 33, 104, and 139.

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GENESIS
1

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GENESIS
2

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PSALM
104

④

PSALM
139

⑤

PSALM
33

9 ERAS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

CREATION

Gen. 1-11

PATRIARCHS

Gen. 12-50

EXODUS

*Exodus-
Deuteronomy*

CONQUEST

Joshua

JUDGES

Judges

KINGDOM

*Samuels, Kings,
Chronicles*

EXILE

Kings

RETURN

*Ezra, Nehemiah,
Esther*

SILENCE

*400 years of
silence*

The story of the Israelite people in the Old Testament can be broken down into nine distinct parts, or eras. Throughout our reading of the Old Testament you will see a brief reminder of where each week's reading takes place in the midst of these nine eras. You will be able to find that reminder to the right of each week's reading plan. We think these eras are helpful in showing how any specific story in the Old Testament relates to the larger story of God's redemptive work throughout the entirety of Israel's story.

ERAS ADAPTED FROM MAX ANDERS', *30 Days to Understanding The Bible*

Family Devotional**Genesis 1:1-2:3****FAMILY INGREDIENT**
STORYTELLING

The Storytelling ingredient is worth the investment. Storytelling is painting a vivid picture, showing our kids that God is the main character in the world and throughout history. Last week, we learned that God wrote a one-of-a-kind book, the Bible. The Bible's opening story is the story of creation, with God as the master-craftsman. We read that God creates the earth and all it contains. We see His power to make everything out of nothing. God looks upon each aspect of creation and calls it good. After the creation of humanity, God looks at all He has created and says it is very good. We are made in His image, able to think and create, to choose right from wrong, and to live in relationship with Him. He invites us into this relationship to know Him and to work together with Him to accomplish the good which He has mapped out for us. Wow! He is personal, powerful, and good!

Family Questions

- What did God use to make the earth?
- What did He create on each day?
- When God made the world, do you think He had a plan in mind?
- What does it mean to be made in God's image and thus different than all other animals? (Hint: see introduction paragraph).
- What do we learn about God from this story? What do we learn about people?
- Relationships develop when we get to know someone, spend time together and help each other. Why does God want to have a relationship with us? What could that look like?

Family Activity

Kids App: "In The Beginning"

Supplies: Camera

Discuss Gen. 1:27. What is an image? Answer: a physical likeness or representation of a person. Take a picture of each family member. Look at the picture and ask them if the photo or "image" is actually that person. Of course it is not. The image cannot speak, think, etc., but it *does* show a lot about the person and what they are like. In the same way, we are created in the "image of God." We are NOT God, but we are created to be like Him and reflect what He is like. We are not perfect images because sin has warped us. God, however, sent His perfect image, Jesus Christ, to restore God's image in us, starting when we accept Him as our Lord and Savior.

ADAPTED FROM "A CHRISTIAN OBJECT LESSON - IMAGE OF GOD" BY CREATIVE BIBLE STUDY

Small Group Discussion

- Think about God's creation. God Himself created the immensity of the universe in order to display His power and glory. Humanity is the pinnacle of all God's creation. Humanity is made in His image, to glorify Him, to live in relationship with Him, and to rule over and subdue the rest of His creation. How does this truth make you feel about your place in the universe?

January 15-21

This Week:

THE FALL

There are two pieces of creation in the Garden of Eden which are prominent features as the story of humanity moves from the creation account into what is known as "The Fall." The first is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. In Genesis 2:16-17, God puts a single boundary in Adam and Eve's lives. They are free to eat of anything in the garden except this particular tree. God tells Adam, "You may surely eat of every tree of the garden, but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die." Everything is available to them minus the fruit of that single tree. Living in right relationship with God requires that Adam and Eve lovingly obey this single command.

The second important piece of creation in the story is a serpent. Genesis 3 describes the serpent as the craftiest of all the creatures which God created. Satan speaks through the serpent, tempting Adam and Eve to eat from the tree, thus breaking the only command God has given them. With this act, sin enters the world. Sin is any failure to perfectly obey God's moral law. Think of it as missing the mark of God's holy standard in action or attitude. Once sin comes into the world, there are consequences for Adam and Eve. Among them are death, illness, fear, insecurity, and pain. None of these were part of God's original design. Every human born since the fall is born with a sinful nature at work inside them, a natural bent toward breaking God's moral law. From this point forward, the Bible is the story of God saving humanity from their sin and restoring them to a right relationship with Him through the life and work of His Son, Jesus.

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GENESIS
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GENESIS
4

③

ISAIAH
64

④

PSALM
25

⑤

PSALM
51

KEY CONCEPT

SIN:

MISSING THE
MARK OF
GOD'S HOLY
STANDARD IN
ACTION OR
ATTITUDE

CREATION

CREATION | FALL | FLOOD | TOWER

Family Devotional**Genesis 3:1-24****FAMILY INGREDIENT**
COURSE CORRECTION

Today's reading highlights the family ingredient of Course Correction in its purest form. In Genesis 3:1-24, we see God, the Father, do the correcting. Adam and Eve choose to listen to the voice of Satan speaking through a serpent instead of believing and obeying God's single command. Because of their disobedience, bad consequences result for them and all of humanity thereafter. Sin enters the hearts of all mankind and God's creation is marred. God's discipline and course correction result. But the Lord promises He will someday crush Satan's head, defeating the power of sin, and offering humanity new life. This happens when Jesus pays the penalty of our sin on the cross and rises from the dead to new life. It will come to an ultimate conclusion when Jesus returns! God is the perfect Father who always corrects our course for our good and His glory. As parents, we must be willing to apply the family ingredient of Course Correction, for the sake of our children, to help them to keep from straying.

Family Questions

- What was the Garden of Eden like before Adam and Eve sinned?
- What instructions did God give Adam and Eve?
- Who tempted them to disobey?
- Why do you think Adam and Eve didn't obey God's instructions?
- What happened when Adam and Eve disobeyed God?
- Does disobedience have consequences for adults and children?
- What kind of relationship did Adam and Eve have with God before they disobeyed? For a clue, look at the first part of Genesis 3:8.
- Thinking question: Do you think creation is still good?

Family Activity

Kids App: "The First Sin"

Bible Memory Activity: Introduce the verse, Psalm 119:11. "I have stored up your word in my heart, that I might not sin against you." Decide on different actions to do to help you remember the verse. With older children, discuss what it means to hide God's Word in your heart. How will that help you? Knowing God's Word is the best way for us to keep from sinning.

Bible Activity: Materials needed: small Bible, picture of treasure chest to tape on Bible (optional). Say, "The Bible is like a treasure chest." Hide the "Treasure Bible" and challenge your kids to find it. Give hints of how close they are by telling them if they are "hot" or "cold."

ADAPTED FROM KATELYN FAGAN'S, *5 Ways to Memorize Scripture With Your Children*

Small Group Discussion

- Is there a command to obey? -- The Bible is filled with divine commands for us to obey. There is clarity about God's will in these areas. Our obedience to His commands leads us into the center of His will. Why is it that when we read God's commands in scripture, it is so difficult for us to obey?
- Can you identify areas of your life where you are tempted to be disobedient to God's commands? How might you live and approach life differently to fight against those temptations?

January 22-28

This Week:

FLOOD

A little sin is almost never enough. In fact, the norm among humanity is that sin, left unchecked, leads to ever-increasing amounts of sin. We see this truth throughout the next segment of scripture. Our story jumps ahead eight generations, from the children of Adam and Eve to the family of Noah. In that time, the world has become entrenched in their sin. It is present at the very core of humanity throughout the entirety of the world: "The Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5).

We learn a few important truths about God's character through the story of Noah's Ark. We learn that sin breaks God's heart. It grieves Him. We also learn that because He is holy, God is just in His anger and judgment in response to sin. At the same time, we see a picture of God's love and grace in that He saves humanity in the midst of their sin. Even those who haven't read much scripture likely know the broad details of Noah's story. Noah is chosen to build the Ark in order to preserve the human race because God is going to flood the earth in order to wipe out an exceedingly sinful generation. In contrast to the rest of humanity, we are told that Noah was a "righteous man, blameless in his generation. Noah walked with God." This week's reading displays God's just judgment of humanity's sin, while graciously saving humanity through the faithful obedience of one righteous man, Noah.

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GENESIS
6

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GENESIS
7

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GENESIS
8

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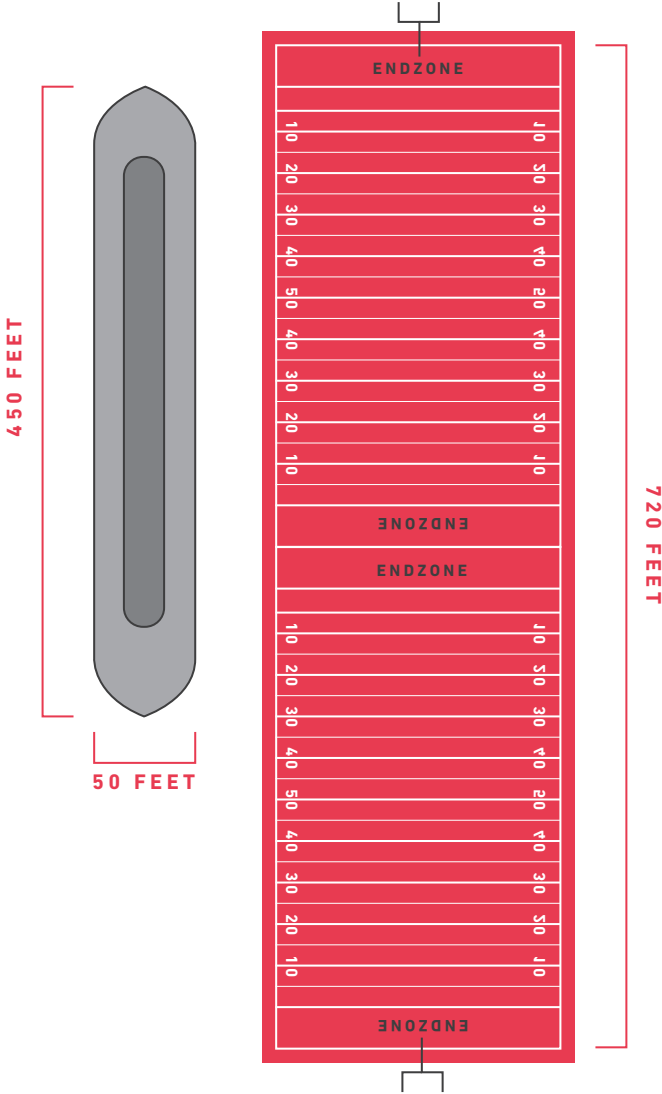
GENESIS
9

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GENESIS
11:1-9,27-31

OLD TESTAMENT VISUALIZED

THE ARK WAS ALMOST 1.5
FOOTBALL FIELDS LONG



CREATION

CREATION | FALL | FLOOD | TOWER

Family Devotional**Genesis 7:1-24**
Genesis 8:1, 15-22**FAMILY INGREDIENT**
WORSHIP,
THANKSGIVING, & JOY

In the days of Noah, God sees continual wickedness in the hearts of humanity. This makes God sad. However, there is one man and his family who choose to live differently. Noah chooses to love and obey God, going against what everyone else is doing. In turn, God saves Noah and his family. In obedience, Noah builds the ark, which God uses to sustain, deliver, and protect Noah, his family, and the animals throughout the flood. Noah is so thankful for God's protection that after leaving the ark, he builds an altar to the Lord and worships Him. This is pleasing to God. God created and longs to sustain, deliver, and protect us. By faith in Jesus' obedient death on the cross, God offers us salvation and new life. This should lead us to worship. The family ingredient of Worship, Thanksgiving, and Joy is pleasing to God.

Family Questions

- How did Noah find all the animals that God wanted on the ark? For a clue, look at Genesis 7:8-9.
- What was different about the ark than any other boat ever built?
- Who shut the door when they all went into the ark? For a clue, look at Genesis 7:16.
- How deep did the water get? For a clue, look at Genesis 7:20. (That's like a two story building or the highest point of our sanctuary.)
- Do our sins make God sad? Why?
- What does it mean in Genesis 8:1 when it says, "God remembered Noah?" Does God always remember us? Why is that special?

Family Activity

Kids App: "Two by Two"

Food Craft: Build an altar using eight jumbo marshmallows, pretzels, peanut butter or frosting, and gummy worms or candy. Make the bottom of the altar with four marshmallows formed into a square. Set the other four marshmallows on top to make your altar taller. You may need to use peanut butter or frosting to attach the marshmallows together. Build a fire on top using the pretzel sticks for wood and gummy worms for flames. As you eat your snack, share about times that God has kept your family safe. Thank God for that protection. Thank God for forgiveness and for Jesus dying for our sins. This would also be a great time to add a worship song of thanksgiving to your time together.

Small Group Discussion

- Is there an example to follow? -- A major portion of the Bible is written in story form. Each book contains the lives of real people who strive to follow God; they are an example for us to follow.
- As you read about the life of Noah we see that "Noah walked with God." (Genesis 6:9) What are some of the qualities that we find to describe Noah's character?

January 29-February 4

This Week:

JOB

Last week's reading brought an end to the first era of the Old Testament storyline, the **CREATION** era. Before moving on to the second era, the **PATRIARCHS**, we want to spend a week reading portions of the story of Job. Chronologically, there is uncertainty as to where Job's life fits within the Old Testament timeline. In fact, the story takes place in a city called Uz, which isn't in Israel. None of the story's main characters are even Israelite people.

The book of Job focuses on one man, Job, and his experience with suffering and grief. When the story begins, Job has everything -- family, wealth, possessions. He also has great faith in the Lord. So much so, that God is willing to allow Satan to afflict Job in various ways to prove that Job's faithfulness is not merely a result of God's blessings upon him, but of Job's commitment to the Lord. After two chapters, Job has lost everything. The remainder of the book deals with Job's desire to know why he is suffering. It plays out in a series of conversations between Job and four friends, culminating in a conversation between God and Job.

The story of Job resonates with us deeply because it deals with questions such as: Why do bad things happen to good people? Do I deserve the suffering I'm experiencing? What is God's role in human suffering? Why is suffering a reality in our world at all? These are questions that have troubled humanity since sin and suffering entered the world after the Fall. Ultimately, we are shown that in the face of suffering and grief, God invites us to trust Him, His eternal goodness, and His work in the midst of our suffering.

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JOB

1:1-2:10

②

JOB

2:11-3:26

③

JOB

4-5

④

JOB

6-7

⑤

JOB

38:1-40:5

KEY CONCEPT

SUFFERING:
IN THE FACE
OF SUFFERING
AND GRIEF,
GOD INVITES
US TO TRUST
HIM AND HIS
ETERNAL
GOODNESS

Family Devotional**Job 41:1-14, Job 42:1-6****FAMILY INGREDIENT**
KNOWING GOD

God describes Job as "a blameless and upright man, who fears God and turns away from evil." Soon after, Job's life goes from wealth and happiness to great suffering. Job doesn't blame God, but he does begin to despair. His friends falsely accuse Job, "Your own sin has brought God's punishment," which Job denies. Then God, Himself, challenges Job. "Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth? Where does darkness reside? Let him who accuses God answer Him!" Job's realization: God is the only One in control. Job confesses his ignorance and lack of trust, and he repents. We, too, need to remember God's character. When negative circumstances happen, that does not mean His love for us has changed or His control has faltered. We need the growing ingredient of Knowing God. In Him alone we can trust.

Family Questions

- Job suffered bad things. How do you think Job was able to keep believing in God's goodness?
- Sometimes hard things happen because we have sinned and sometimes it does not have anything to do with what we've done. Give examples.
- When bad things happen, does that mean that God is angry with us? Remember: bad things came into the world with sin in the Garden of Eden, as a result of man's choices, not God's.
- Is it okay to get angry or upset at God when bad things happen? Read Psalm 22:1-2. The writer is angry because he feels like God is far away.
- Now read Psalm 22:24. The author reminds us that God does not hide His face from us, but listens to our cries for help.

Family Activity

For fun, read through God's questions to Job concerning crocodiles and answer them (Job 41:1-14). For younger children pick a few questions (see vs. 5 and 14). Part of the family ingredient of Knowing God is learning that we can trust Him when difficult things happen and come to Him through prayer.

Activity: Create Family Prayer Log. On the left side of the page, write down specific things that you are praying about as a family and log the date. Draw a line down the center; on the right side, note any progress and the date when the prayer is answered. Continue daily. Keep this as a testimony to your family of all the ways that God has been working.

Craft Idea: Family Prayer Jar. Materials needed: jar, vase, basket or box, scrapbook or colored paper, decorations (optional). Cut paper into squares. Decorate the container. Brainstorm family needs as well as needs outside your family. Write prayer requests on squares; add to jar. Set aside blank squares for additional requests. Before meal or bedtime, pull out a request and pray for that need. As prayers are answered, thank God for His help.

ADAPTED FROM "MAKING A PRAYER JAR" BY OUR FAMILY FOR HIS GLORY

Small Group Discussion

- Is there an example from Job's life to follow? -- No one is immune to suffering; each of us experiences pain and suffering at some level through our life circumstances. What can we learn from Job's example? How do we prepare ourselves to persevere through any pain or suffering that may come our way in life?

February 5-11

This Week:

ABRAHAM

Covenant, faith, and obedience feature prominently in the next era of the Old Testament narrative, the **PATRIARCHS**. After scattering all of humanity from the tower of Babel, the story focuses on on the family line of one man: Abram, who would later have his name changed to Abraham. Abraham, his son Isaac, and grandson Jacob are the patriarchs, or fathers, of the Israelite people. From Genesis 12 through the end of the Old Testament, we read the story of God leading, loving, and patiently enduring the sinfulness of His chosen people, the Israelites.

This week's reading is incredibly important for understanding not just the remainder of the Old Testament, but for understanding the whole picture of God's work to redeem humanity from their sin. God establishes a covenant, or divine and unchangeable agreement, with Abraham. The covenant is three-fold: 1) A promise of land (Genesis 12:1). 2) A promise of descendants (Genesis 12:2). 3) A promise of blessing, not just to Abraham's family, but to the whole world through Abraham's family (Genesis 12:3). By faith, Abraham leaves his home in Ur, follows God, and steps into this covenant relationship with Him. The Lord, in His faithfulness, fulfills these promises to Abraham and his descendants throughout the story of the Old Testament. Later, God will bring about their ultimate fulfillment thousands of years later in the person and work of Jesus Christ, whereby all people can experience the blessing of salvation through faith in Him. God's covenant with Abraham initiates His eternally existent plan to bring redemption from sin through His Son, Jesus Christ.

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GENESIS
12-13

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GENESIS
14-15

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GENESIS
16

④

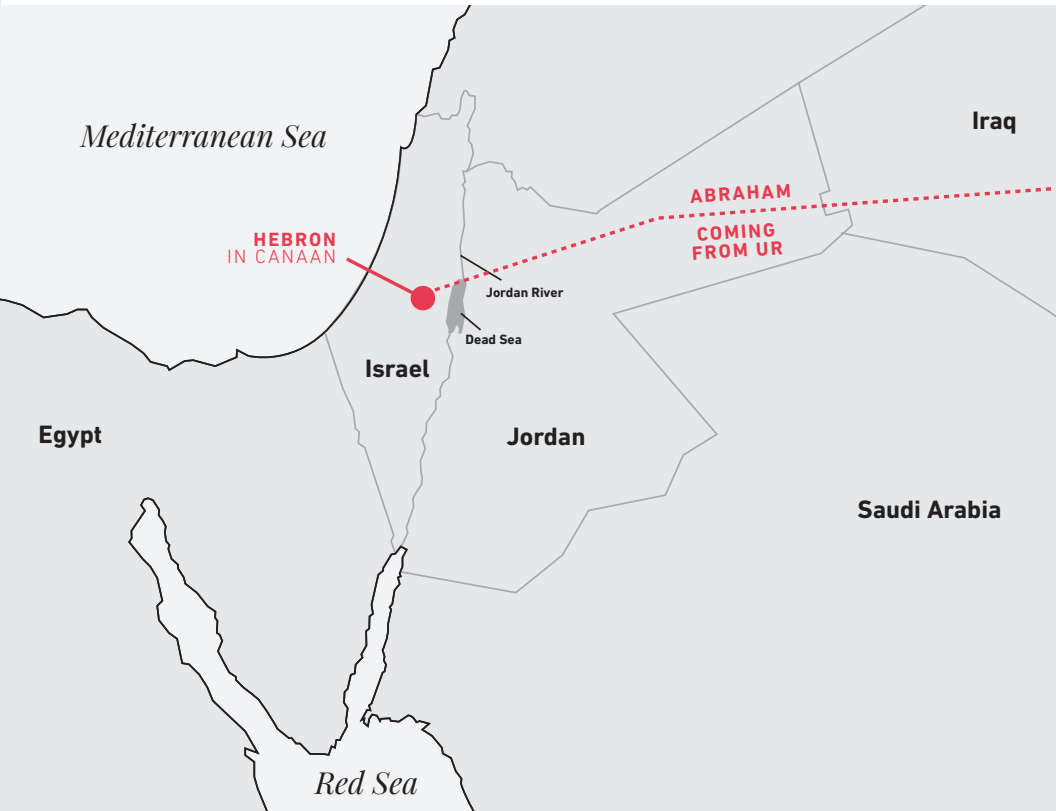
GENESIS
17-18

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GENESIS
19-20

OLD TESTAMENT MOVEMENT

ABRAHAM TO CANAAN



The map above displays two important pieces of information. First, it shows the general movement of Abraham from his home in Ur to Canaan. Second, it shows the border of modern-day countries, to help visualize where the Old Testament story takes place.

PATRIARCHS

ABRAHAM | ISAAC | JACOB | JOSEPH

Family Devotional**Genesis 12:1-9****FAMILY INGREDIENT**
OUT OF THE COMFORT
ZONE LIVING

How many of us always obey, right away, the first time? God calls Abram to leave everything behind; his country, people, and father's household to go to an unknown destination that He will show him. God promises Abram that if he will do this, he will receive blessings. Despite the insecurity of not knowing the plan or destination, Abram goes, taking his wife and household. In faith, Abram believes in God's power and goodness. Likewise, God calls us to live in a way that sometimes asks more of us than we think we want to do or give. This is the family ingredient of Out of the Comfort Zone Living. God will ask us to take risks and obey despite obstacles. Evidence shows that leading our children in this kind of living teaches them how to live by faith, be different than the world, and to know the God who directs their path.

Family Questions

- How old was Abram when God spoke to him?
- What did God tell Abram to do?
- What do you think it would be like to leave your home, school, and neighborhood without knowing exactly where you were going? What would be your reaction?
- With time and prayer, do you think your reaction to God's adventurous plan might change?
- Abram heard God speak to him when he drew near and worshiped God. Read Psalm 16:11 together. What does God promise to us as we come closer to His presence? Why is this important?

Family Activity

Kids App: "God's Amazing Promise"

Drama Activity

Props: Walking sticks and costumes (optional), building blocks, blanket or tent, paper, and crayons. Assign parts and label the signs (see below). The first character you always choose is God.

Characters: God, Abram, Sarah, Lot, animals, servants.

Action: Abram is seated by Sign #1 (Labeled "father's household"). Others pretend to cook or care for animals. God speaks to Abram, "Leave your father's house and go where I show you." Have Abram gather up everyone and walk to Sign #2 (labeled "Tree"). God speaks again, "To your children I will give this land." Abram makes an altar using blocks; Abram worships. Now pretend to walk up and down hills to Sign #3 (labeled "Hills"). Set up blanket fort or tent. Abram makes another altar and worships. Discuss the "Family Questions." Pray that God will help your family do whatever He asks of you, even if it seems scary or unsure.

Small Group Discussion

- Is there a promise in which to trust or rest? -- The Bible is filled with promises from God to His children – to bless, to enrich, to satisfy. God's promises provide hope and meet all of our needs. A challenge we often face is that His promises do not happen in our timing. God's promises are fulfilled in His timing.
- As you reflect on the reading from this week, how difficult do you think it was for Abraham to believe those promises? In what ways is God's guidance for us similar to the way He guided Abraham?
- In what ways are Abraham's faith and obedience examples for us?

February 12-18

This Week:

ISAAC/JACOB

God quickly begins fulfilling His promises to Abraham. He and his family move to the land of Canaan. In their old age, Abraham and his wife, Sarah, give birth to a son, Isaac. These illustrate a truth about God's character: He is always faithful to His promises. If God promises, it will come to pass. A few chapters later we read of Isaac having two sons, Esau and Jacob. And thus, the family line of Abraham begins to grow. As it does, the passing of blessing from one generation to the next is an important feature of the story. Abraham's blessing is passed to Isaac, then Isaac's to Jacob, the younger of his two sons. It is Jacob who is renamed "Israel," giving the Israelite people their name. "Israel" means, "wrestles with God." Jacob's literal wrestling with God is a prominent event in his life. The Israelites wrestling to remain faithful to God is a recurring theme throughout the Old Testament.

This week's reading also displays a truth we'll see throughout scripture: God uses broken, sinful people to advance His will for His glory. Abraham's family line is riddled with dysfunction and sin. Despite being the "fathers" of the Israelite people and the Jewish faith, Abraham and his family struggle to live righteous lives before the Lord. Their sin makes doing so impossible. Sin makes it impossible for any human to live a perfectly righteous life before the Lord. Nonetheless, God continues to use Abraham's family to advance His plan. We will see this not only in the lives of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, but throughout history as told all through the Bible and lived out in the world around us.

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GENESIS
21:1-23:2

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GENESIS
24, 25:7-11

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GENESIS
25:19-27:46

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GENESIS
28:10-30:43

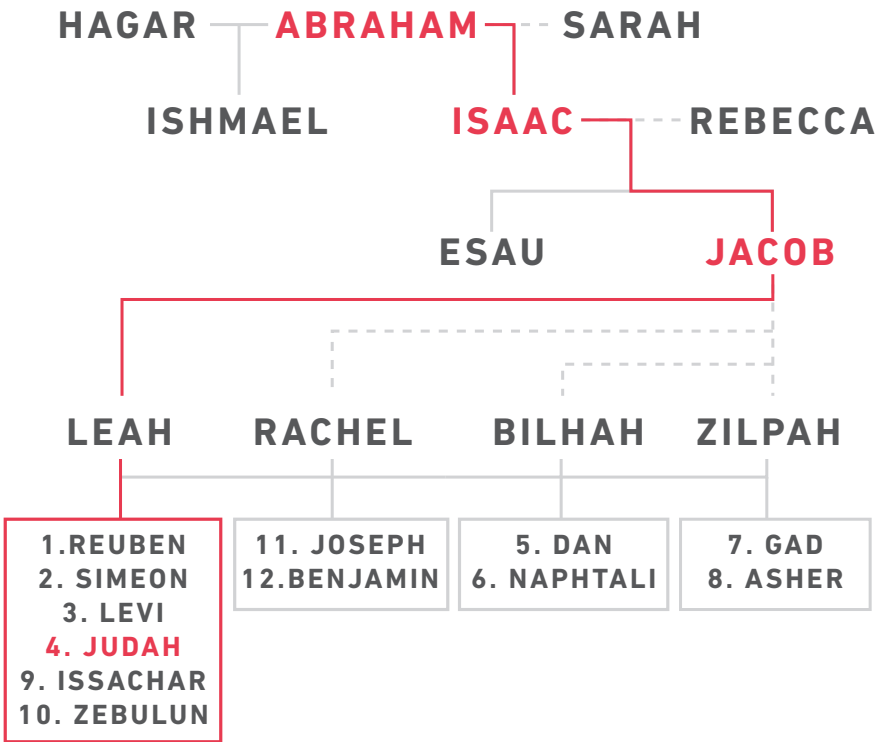
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GENESIS
32-33, 35:9-15

OLD TESTAMENT VISUALIZED

FAMILY TREE OF THE PATRIARCHS

Jacob had 12 children through 4 wives. Though our story shifts to the life of **Joseph**, God's plan to save humanity from their sin will ultimately continue through the family line of **Judah**, Jacob's 4th son.



PATRIARCHS

ABRAHAM | ISAAC | JACOB | JOSEPH

Family Devotional**Genesis 22****FAMILY INGREDIENT**
MODELING

God keeps His promises. Isaac is born to Abraham and Sarah! In the midst of their joy, God tests Abraham: who does Abraham love more -- Isaac or God? The Lord commands Abraham to take Isaac and offer him as a sacrifice. Will Abraham trust and obey, believing God to be able to keep His promise regarding Isaac? Without Isaac, how can God's promise be fulfilled? Furthermore, how can Abraham kill his only son? Why would God want him to do this? Just as Abraham is ready to make the sacrifice, God calls out, "Stop!" Instead, God provides a ram for the sacrifice. Abraham learns that he can trust and obey the Lord, even when things seem too difficult. The ram foreshadows God offering His only Son, Jesus, as a sacrifice to pay the price for our sins. Abraham modeled to Isaac, in a very vivid way, what it means to obey God. As parents, we, too, must remember that we are constantly adding to our Modeling ingredient, whether for good or bad. We are to model faithful obedience so our children can see Christ in us and learn how to walk in faithful devotion with Him.

Family Questions

- If we have to wait for something we want, it is very special to us when we finally receive that gift. Why was Isaac so important to Abraham and Sarah?
- God gave Abraham a very difficult command. What was it?
- Why did God test Abraham in this way? For a clue, look at Gen. 22:12.
- Does God ask us to do hard things? Discuss.
- Who is smarter, God or us? While we don't always understand, we can always trust Him to know and help us to obey.

Family Activity

Kids App: "Abraham's Big Test"

Family Modeling Activity: Each person needs a partner (or it can be done in a group of 3, but 2 works best). One child is the leader, the other pretends to be his/her mirror reflection. Facing each other, the leader slowly moves his/her body -- lifting an arm, moving a leg, turning his/her head, or even making silly faces while the child who is the mirror copies. Move slowly so the mirror child can keep up. Switch roles. Parents may need to first model how to play. Older kids challenge: Go faster and faster. Discuss some behaviors you see family members model that are good behaviors to copy. Who are some people outside your family who are good examples to follow?

Small Group Discussion

- Is there a promise in which to trust or rest? -- Consider the length of time God made Abraham and Sarah wait for a child. Imagine how difficult it would have been to hear from the Lord that you are to now sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering.
- What does the story of Abraham and Isaac show us about God? What does this story show us about Abraham's faith and obedience?
- Which is easier for you, believing in God's promises or obeying His commands?
- In this week's reading, we see two ends of a spectrum: Abraham's faith, trust, and obedience, and Jacob's wrestling with the Lord, leading to his renewed faith. There are multiple blessings in wrestling with God. So when He calls you to wrestle with Him in prayer, it is an invitation to receive His blessing. Stay with Him and don't give up. All of our struggling with God in faith leads to peace. As you read the account of Jacob, is there an example to follow in how to wrestle with God?

February 19-25

This Week:

JOSEPH

After Abraham, the story shifts from Jacob, Abraham's grandson, to Jacob's twelve sons, specifically his eleventh son, Joseph. Joseph is Jacob's favorite son. This fact, as well as his own words and behavior, leads his brothers to sell Joseph to a group of traders headed for Egypt, which was the world's most powerful and influential nation at the time. Through Joseph's years in Egypt, God delivers His chosen people — Abraham's descendants, the Israelites — from a region-wide famine.

The movement of the Israelite people from their home to Egypt sets up the most powerful story in all of the Old Testament, the Exodus. As we have seen up to this point, God continually works through the lives of broken and sinful people for His glory, the good of His plan, and the fulfillment of His promises. We see this truth throughout scripture, and can trust it in our lives today as well. This truth is reinforced in the life of Joseph. This week's reading is best summed up by a statement Joseph makes to his brothers at the end of Genesis, "As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive." (Genesis 50:20)

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GENESIS
37

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GENESIS
39-40

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GENESIS
41-42

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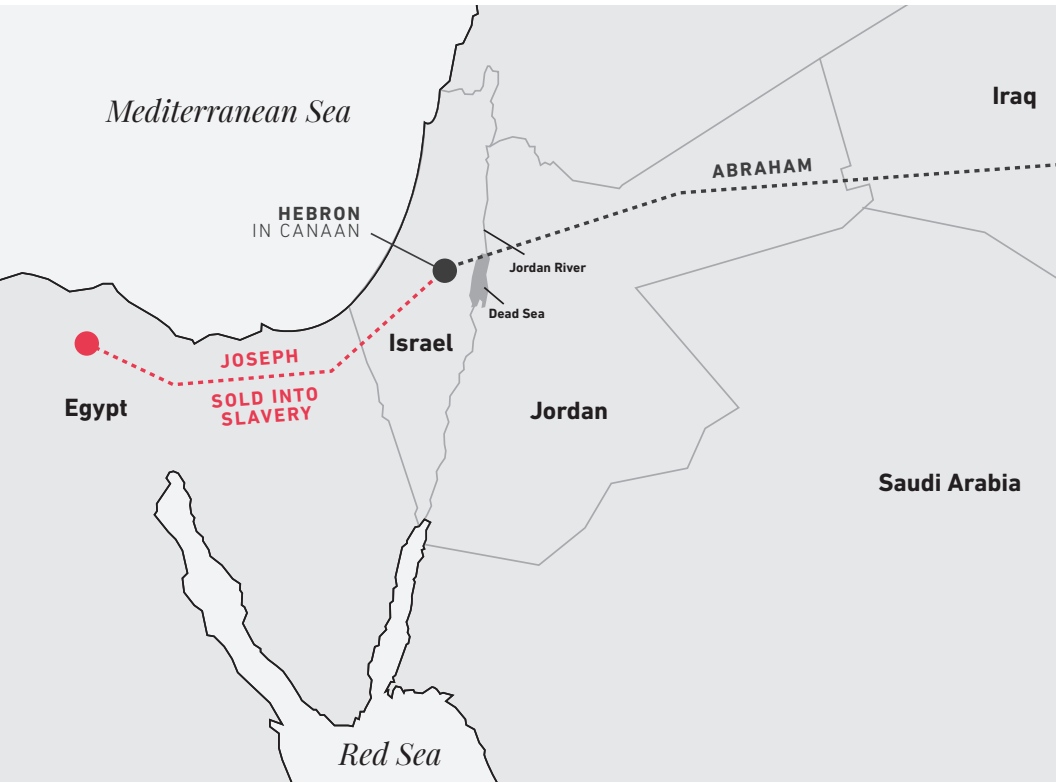
GENESIS
43-44

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GENESIS
45-47:12

OLD TESTAMENT MOVEMENT

JOSEPH TO EGYPT



Joseph is sold into slavery by his brothers and taken from his home in Canaan to Egypt.

PATRIARCHS

ABRAHAM | ISAAC | JACOB | JOSEPH

Family Devotional**Genesis 41:1-16, 37-57**

FAMILY INGREDIENT

TAKING RESPONSIBILITY

Pharaoh has a disturbing dream. Hearing of Joseph's powers, he calls for him to be brought out of prison to interpret the dream. Joseph replies that he can not interpret the dream himself, but His God can give Pharaoh the answer he seeks. In this way, Joseph gives glory to God. Joseph also uses his God-given skills to oversee the food supply during Egypt's famine. By doing this, Joseph is able to feed all of Egypt as well as his own family. God calls us to take responsibility for the gifts and talents He gives us and to give Him glory as we live and serve Him. Helping each person in the family to use the ingredient of Taking Responsibility will strengthen your family.

Family Questions

- What was Pharaoh's dream? How did Pharaoh react to it?
- Pharaoh asked Joseph to tell him what his dream meant. According to Joseph, who can explain Pharaoh's dream?
- Why did God give this dream to Pharaoh? (see vs. 28)
- Joseph gives Pharaoh a plan to save his nation and other nations from the coming famine (see vs.33-36). Where did Joseph get the wisdom for his plan?
- Did Joseph have to take responsibility and help Pharaoh by explaining his dream or wisely overseeing the food supply? Could he have let his anger (due to being thrown unjustly into prison) make him unwilling to help? What would have been the result?
- How will you benefit by taking responsibility for your gifts and talents? How will God benefit? How will others benefit?

Family Activity

Kids App: "The Dreamer"
"Dreams Come True"

Parent Prep: Read the passage so you will be able to tell the story simply.

Props: pillow, crown, ring, necklace, crayons and paper, and popcorn or pretzels. Have kids draw pictures of seven fat cows, skinny cows, ears of corn, and withered ears of corn.

Characters: God, Joseph, Pharaoh, court officials.

Action: Pharaoh (with a crown, ring, necklace, and pillow) tries to sleep. Have him toss and turn. "God" should hold the pictures over Pharaoh as he sleeps. Pharaoh wakes up, looks scared and calls for someone to explain his dream. Court officials run to Joseph. Pharaoh demands an explanation. Joseph says that he cannot, but that God knows the meaning. Joseph prays and explains the dream. Next, have Joseph say that he has a plan to save the people from starving. Have Pharaoh point to Joseph and choose him to be the leader of his plan. Pharaoh puts a ring and chain on Joseph. Joseph is now in charge of the food. Joseph serves the snack. Discuss the "Family Questions." Pray that God will help your family to be responsible for what He wants you to do.

Small Group Discussion

- Sometimes faithfulness to God and His word sets us on a course where our circumstances get worse, not better. It is then that knowing God's promises and His ways are crucial. Faith in God's future grace for us is what sustains us in those desperate moments. As you read this week about the life of Joseph consider:
- Is there an example to follow?
- Is there a promise in which to trust or rest?

February 26-March 4

This Week:

MOSES

Many years pass from the end of Joseph's life to the beginning of the next era of the Old Testament, **EXODUS**. During those years the Israelite people live in Egypt, growing in number. Due to the passage of time, a pharaoh comes into power who knows nothing of Joseph. He likely knows very little about how or why the Israelite people came to live in Egypt. In the intervening time, the Israelites have been forced into slavery to the Egyptian people. Their work is hard and they cry out to the Lord for deliverance. Hearing their cry for help, God sets into motion His plan to deliver them out of their bondage.

Moses is the person God chooses to lead His people out of slavery. This week's reading recounts Moses' birth, calling, and preparation by the Lord for the task ahead of him. The preservation of Moses' life as a baby has a miraculous element to it. His calling involves the Lord speaking to Moses from a burning bush. He is given powerful signs to do before the Israelite people in order to prove his calling from the Lord. As their slavery and oppression become more severe, God promises to deliver them from the Egyptians and to return them to their home in Promised Land. God tells them, "I am the Lord, and I will bring you out from under the burdens of the Egyptians... I will redeem you with an outstretched arm" (Exodus 6:6). Through Moses' obedience to God and his leadership of the people, God is on the verge of saving the Israelites.

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EXODUS

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EXODUS

2-3

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EXODUS

4

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EXODUS

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EXODUS

6

OLD TESTAMENT VISUALIZED

MOSES FORESHADOWS JESUS

Throughout the Old Testament, there are various figures who foreshadow Jesus Christ. Moses is one of those individuals. Below is a chart of some of the similarities between the work of Moses on behalf of the Israelites and the work of Jesus on behalf of humanity. What Moses does to save the Israelites is a foreshadowing of what Jesus will ultimately do to save humanity from their sin.

MOSES

Pharoah tries to kill all baby boys

Leaves the palace to save his people

Rejected by the people he came to save

Performs miracles by God's power

Redeems Israel from slavery to Egypt

Delivers God's law, illuminating sin

JESUS

Herod tries to kill all baby boys

Leaves heaven to save humanity

Rejected by the people He came to save

Performs miracles by His own power

Redeems humanity from slavery to sin

Fulfills God's law, breaking the power of sin

EXODUS

DELIVERANCE | THE LAW | KADESH-BARNEA | WANDERING

Family Devotional**Exodus 3:1-15****FAMILY INGREDIENT**
IDENTITY

After a miraculous deliverance, baby Moses grows up in the palace with Pharaoh's daughter. As an adult, he begins to understand the cruelty of the Israelites' slavery. After murdering an Egyptian overseer who is abusing an Israelite, Moses flees to Midian to escape punishment. God calls Moses to lead His people out of slavery. Moses sees himself as unsuitable for the job, likely to fail, and possibly be killed. God knows the truth. With God's help, Moses can accomplish this seemingly impossible assignment. Moses resists, "Who am I?" he says. God answers a different question; He introduces Himself as the great I AM. "Look at Me and My power!" What our children believe about themselves, good or bad, is powerful. Different voices and sources will falsely label our children. The family ingredient of Identity is crucial. Our job is to counteract lies with the truth of who they are in God's eyes.

Family Questions

- How did God appear to Moses?
- What did God instruct Moses to do in His presence and why?
- What was Moses' assignment? Why did Moses refuse at first?
- Who did God say He was? (see vs. 14) What do you think that means?
- When Moses thought about his own abilities, how did he feel about himself? When God thought about Moses working together with Him, what did He know was true?
- When we remember what God thinks and says about us, how will that change how we view ourselves?

Family Activity

Kids App: "A Baby and a Bush"

Craft Idea: Search Pinterest "God made me special"

Toddler/Preschool Book Resource: *God Made Just One* by Bonnie Jenson

Psalm 139:1-14 beautifully describes how God created us. He knit us together. He never forgets us. He is never far away. Starting in infancy we can speak these life-giving words to our children. There will be times when angry words and harsh names will be thrown at them. Read and discuss this passage as a protection against lies. We are part of our child's defense system; God's presence with skin, reassuring and upholding them. May our words never support ugly lies that cut down our children, but always be in line with God's truths! Our children must know that their identity is not in their looks, friends, activities, or anything of this world. Furthermore, we must pray, as parents, that our children will realize that we are all sinners due to humanity's fall. That is why we need a Savior, Jesus. We can share with them the amazing truth that through Christ's death on the cross and His resurrection, we can be born again. Pray for this day of rejoicing!

Small Group Discussion

- Is there a promise in which to trust or rest? When God revealed Himself through the burning bush, He called Moses to be His messenger to Pharaoh to release His people. This call scared Moses.
- Do you feel like God has placed a specific calling on your life?
- Do you feel unqualified for what God is calling you to do? Have you been arguing with God over your calling qualifications? If so, remember Moses. Remember that God's call on you is ultimately not about you. It's about Him.
- Are you willing for God to use your weakness to show how impressive He is?

March 5-11

This Week:

THE EXODUS

Following Moses' birth and calling comes a confrontation between God and Pharaoh. Moses, speaking on behalf of the Lord, is a central figure throughout their interactions. In the most potent display of God's power since the creation account, God uses supernatural acts, called plagues, to convince Pharaoh to let the Israelite people go. On multiple occasions, Pharaoh's heart is hardened and he refuses to allow the people to leave and worship the Lord. This back and forth between God's plagues and Pharaoh's refusal to release the Israelites culminates in the Passover, during the tenth and final plague.

In the Passover, God turns Pharaoh's actions against him. As Pharaoh once attempted to kill all the Israelite baby boys, God is going to strike down the firstborn of every Egyptian family. At the same time, he provides a means for the firstborns of the Israelite people to be saved: the passover lamb. Each family is to take a year-old lamb without blemish and slaughter it on the evening before God's final plague upon Egypt. They are then to smear some of the lamb's blood on the doorframe of their home. As God moves through Egypt and sees the blood of the lamb on the doorway of an Israelite home, He will pass over, not killing the firstborn of that family. By the blood of a spotless lamb, the Israelite people are saved. The Passover foreshadows the work of Jesus to redeem humanity from slavery to sin. He is a spotless lamb whose blood saves all who place their faith in Him. The Passover is the clearest Old Testament shadow of what Jesus would one day do on the cross, not just for Israel, but for all humanity.

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EXODUS
7-8

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EXODUS
9-10

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EXODUS
11-12

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EXODUS
13:17-14:31

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EXODUS
15

OLD TESTAMENT VISUALIZED

GOD'S JUDGMENT ON EGYPT

PLAGUES

1. Nile to Blood
2. Frogs
3. Lice
4. Flies
5. Death to Livestock
6. Boils
7. Hail
8. Locusts
9. Darkness

There is a pattern to each of these plagues.

1. Pharaoh is given a chance to allow Israel to leave Egypt to worship the Lord, but refuses.
2. God sends a plague upon Pharaoh.
3. Pharaoh appears repentant, but ultimately refuses to allow Israel to leave.

PASSOVER WEEK

10TH DAY:

Families in Israel take a 1 year old, unblemished lamb.

14TH DAY:

Each family slaughters their lamb at twilight, eats it, and smears its blood on the doorpost.

14TH-21ST DAY:

They eat unleavened bread.

PLAGUE #10: DEATH

The first born of every family without the blood of a lamb on their doorpost is killed.

There is great wailing among the Egyptians at the loss of their children, including the house of Pharaoh.

FLIGHT FROM EGYPT

Pharaoh sends the Israelites out of Egypt, resulting in their miraculous crossing of the Red Sea and the destruction of the Egyptian army.

EXODUS

DELIVERANCE | THE LAW | KADESH-BARNEA | WANDERING

Family Devotional**Exodus 14:5-31****FAMILY INGREDIENT**
STORYTELLING

In the Bible, God is the main character. It is His story and He is the hero; we, humanity, are the supporting cast. Today's reading could be entitled, "God to the Rescue." Main role: God. Supporting cast: Moses and God's people. Bad guys: Pharaoh and his officials. After 400 years of slavery and ten plagues, culminating in the Passover and the death of Egypt's firstborn sons, Pharaoh finally releases God's people. Today's story begins with Pharaoh and his officials rethinking their decision. "We have lost our slaves! What were we thinking?" They begin in hot pursuit of the Israelites. Watch the reactions of the Israelites and Moses. Despite their lack of faith, God is the Hero and faithfully delivers His people. Today, God invites us to take part in His story as His supporting cast. He will call us to many exciting adventures with numerous twists and turns. Hold on. Knowing He is God and He knows how the story ends means He can always be trusted!

Family Questions

- Describe our main character, God. List words that are true about Him.
- Describe the bad guys, Pharaoh and officials.
- Describe how God's people acted in this story. For a clue, look at Exodus 14:10-12.
- What did Moses tell the people (vs.13-14)? Do you think Moses was also afraid?
- What did God say? Look at Ex. 14:15-18.
- God understood how terrified His people were; they did not understand how powerful He is. What did God do to make them feel His protection? See Ex. 14:19-20.
- What happened to the bad guys as they chased God's people?
- What was the result of everything the Israelites had seen? See Ex. 14:31.

Family Activity

Kids App: "God Makes a Way"

Drama Activity

Props: blanket, stick, toy bad guys (optional). Assign parts: God, Moses, and Israelites. To make the Red Sea, hold corners of the blanket and wave it up and down.

Action: Tell the story simply. The Israelites escape, then wait, terrified, at the edge of Red Sea. Have God command the wind to blow (add sound effects) and have Moses hold up his staff. Lower the blanket to the floor, in the middle, and hold sides straight up. The Israelites should walk across blanket on the "dry land." After everyone is safely across to other side, make the toy bad guys chase after the Israelites. Have Moses stretch out his hand, hold up his staff, and command the blanket waves to come crashing down. Discuss the "Family Questions" and ask God to help you to always trust Him, even when things look bad. Pray about specific situations where His power and love are needed.

Small Group Discussion

- When have you anticipated a change but circumstances forced you to wait? How did you feel when the time finally arrived? The long awaited exodus from Egypt was upon God's people and they knew the cost it would take for Pharaoh to be convinced to set them free. God knew how quickly His people would forget the miracle of their liberation from bondage in Egypt, so not only did He require an annual remembrance, He placed strict limits to prevent them from being distracted with the busyness of their usual work.
- Have you made time to pause and remember how and when God set you free from the bondage of eternally unforgiven sin?

March 12-18

This Week:

10 COMMANDMENTS

After fleeing from Egypt, Moses leads the Israelites across the Red Sea and out into the wilderness. Their initial destination is Mt. Sinai, where God has commanded them to go in order to worship Him. From there, they are to journey to the Promised Land. Note how quickly the Israelites resort to grumbling and complaining to the Lord. He has just miraculously saved them from their bondage. He parted the Red Sea and allowed them to walk through on dry land. In the next two chapters, the people of Israel begin to question whether or not God is going to provide for them. This pattern repeats itself throughout the Old Testament: God acts on behalf of His people, they rejoice in His blessing momentarily, then turn from Him surprisingly quickly.

Once at Mount Sinai, the Israelite people receive God's Law, the standard by which His chosen people are to live in relation to Him and other people. The beginning of His Law is the 10 Commandments. As God's people, the Israelites were to live a particular way, in loving obedience to His commands. Because of our sinful condition, no person could ever hope to live in perfect conformity to God's holy Law. Instead, the Law illuminates our sin and need for a savior. At Mount Sinai, the Israelites also receive a plan for building the tabernacle, a moveable shelter that was to house the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the presence of the Lord. Wherever the Israelites travel, they are to take the Ark. When they stop, they are to set up the tabernacle and place the Ark inside. In this way, the presence of the Lord is to always be with the Israelite people.

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EXODUS
16-17

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EXODUS
18-19

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EXODUS
20, 23:20-33

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EXODUS
32-33

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EXODUS
35:1-29, 40:34-38

KEY CONCEPT

THE LAW:

ILLUMINATES
OUR SIN AND
NEED FOR A
SAVIOR. NO
PERSON BUT
JESUS HAS
EVER FULLY
OBEYED GOD'S
LAW.

EXODUS

DELIVERANCE | THE LAW | KADESH-BARNEA | WANDERING

Family Devotional**Exodus 35:4-10, 20-29**

FAMILY INGREDIENT

FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS

God calls His people to gather together and worship Him. This is to take place in the tent of meeting, or what is known as the Tabernacle. In preparation for its construction, the people are to freely give the necessary materials and their skills of craftsmanship. The people's hearts are moved to obey and give many gifts, as well as their time and talents. Working together, the Tabernacle is built. These offerings are described as freewill offerings because they come freely, from the people's hearts. This is a beautiful example of the family ingredient that joins believers together, the Fellowship of Believers. Today God calls us to gather together to worship Him. He calls us to support one another. He asks us to freely give of our possessions, time, and skills. God can accomplish much through his people, the Church, working alongside one another.

Family Questions

- What was the purpose of the Tabernacle?
- Who was responsible to bring the needed materials and skills to do the work?
- Did God force the people to give?
- What word is used to describe the people's offerings in Exodus 35:29? What does "freewill" mean?
- Which describes you best -- a lone ranger or a part of the team? What is dangerous about being a lone ranger? What is important to remember when picking a group of friends or a church?

Family Activity

Kids App: "God Makes a Way"

God made us social beings that need relationship. First we need a relationship with Him as Savior and Lord. Additionally, God tells us that we need Christian friendships.

Live It Out Activity #1: Working together, choose a family you want to get to know better and invite them over for supper or dessert. Plan out your meal/dessert and prepare it together.

Live It Out Activity #2: Fellowship with other believers is sweet. Discuss Hebrews 10:24-25. One of the reasons we go to church is not for ourselves, but for others, to "spur one another on toward love and good deeds." What does this mean? Share a sweet treat and discuss: What are some things that make it challenging for our family to get to church on Sunday? Brainstorm how to overcome these challenges. Pray that God will help you to get to church/children's classes and dive more deeply into relationships with other believers.

Small Group Discussion

- Is there a command to obey? Is there a sin to avoid?
- God was preparing His people for a special covenant with Him. God told the Israelites, "If you will indeed obey my voice and keep my covenant, you shall be my treasured possession among all peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation." (Ex. 19:5-6) God then provided the law to Moses, designed to help the Israelites keep their covenant with Him. How would you respond if God offered you a covenant that would make you a treasured possession?
- How does Jesus make this offer a reality for all of us?
- What do these laws show us about God's character? What do they show us about His desire for us?

March 19-25

This Week:

WANDERING

The biblical books of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy contain a full recording of all the ceremonial, civil, and moral laws, as well as an account of the Israelite people's travels while in the wilderness. The book of Leviticus is dedicated to the Law. The ceremonial portions of the Law refer to the sacrifices and religious practices associated with how the Israelite people were to worship God. The civil portions of the Law give instructions for governing themselves as a people. The moral portions of the Law are made up of commands for how the Israelites were to live their lives.

Numbers and Deuteronomy tell of the Israelite's time in the desert. After leaving Mount Sinai, they traveled directly to Kadesh Barnea, a city on the southern tip of Canaan, the Promised Land. This week, we read of what happens when ten spies are sent to scout out the Promised Land. Their mission, and the Israelite people's response to it, leads to a forty-year period known as "The Wandering," in which the Israelites do just that: wander around in the wilderness. God pronounces this period by saying, "Not one of these men of this evil generation shall see the good land that I swore to your fathers," (Deuteronomy 1:35) except Caleb and Joshua. And thus, an entire generation of Israelites pass away while wandering the desert. At the end of forty years, the people arrive near the banks of the Jordan River, just east of Canaan, where they receive the Law again and prepare to enter their long awaited Promised Land.

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NUMBERS
11, 13

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NUMBERS 14
DEUT. 1:26-46

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DEUT.
2:1-4:14

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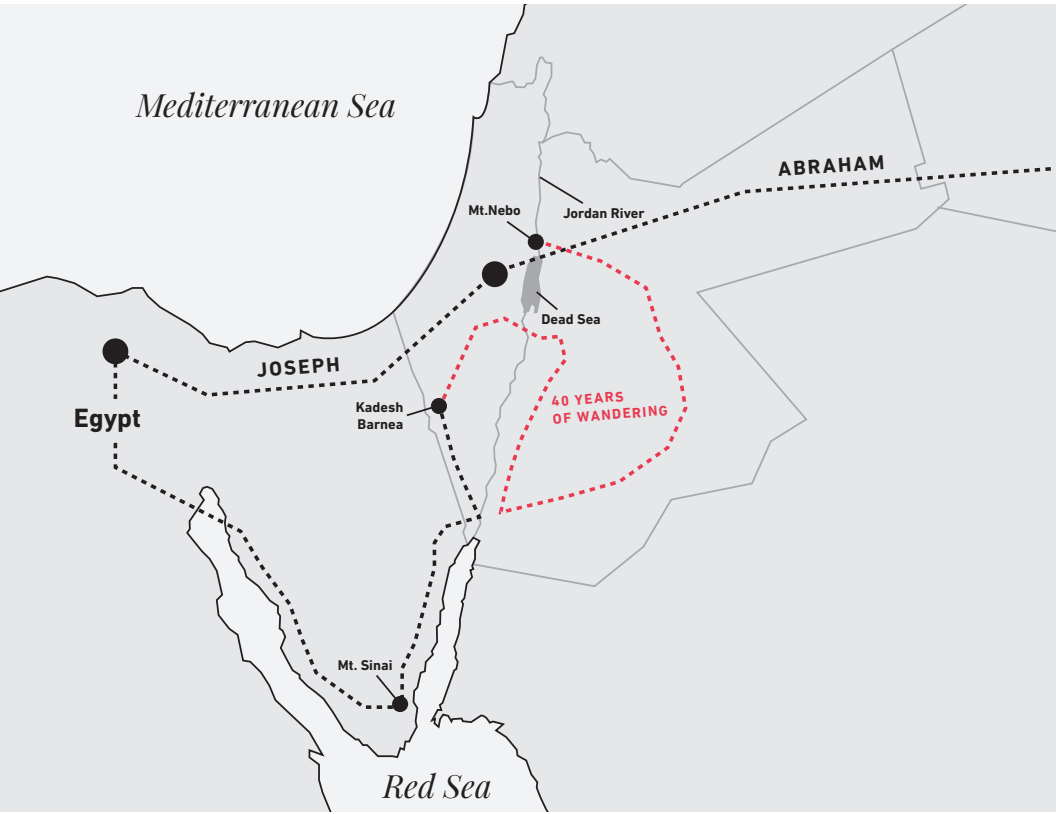
DEUT.
6-7

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DEUT.
8-9

OLD TESTAMENT MOVEMENT

KADESH BARNEA-MT. NEBO



After believing the bad report of the spies sent into the Promised Land, Israel spends 40 years wandering in the wilderness as a generation passes away. They finally arrive at Mt. Nebo before crossing into the Promised Land.

EXODUS

DELIVERANCE | THE LAW | KADESH-BARNEA | WANDERING

Family Devotional**Deuteronomy 6:4-12****FAMILY INGREDIENT**
LOVE AND RESPECT

As the Israelites prepare to enter the Promised Land, God gives them commands for living in close relationship with Him. They are to love Him, and only Him, with all their heart, soul, and strength. Only in this state of living will they enjoy the long, good life that He desires. He also foresees the challenge of training the next generation of children to know and obey Him. Consequently, He gives practical methods. An intentional and safe baton pass allows faith to continue from one generation to the next. Lastly, He reminds them that when they get settled with all the blessings that He gives them, they are not to forget that everything has come from Him. God also instructs us to pass our faith on to our children. The foundational ingredient of Love and Respect helps our children to hear our instructions with open ears and hearts. Harshness and belittling have the opposite effect. That is why this ingredient is so vital.

Family Questions

- How much are we to love God? What does that look like?
- Deut. 6:7-9 lists some suggested times and places the Israelites could use to talk about God throughout their day with their children. What were they? What would that look like for our family to apply today?
- What were all the things God lists in Deut. 6:10-11 that the people might receive in the Promised Land? What does He warn them about and why (vs. 12)?
- Read James 1:17. What does this verse remind us about all the good things we have?

Family Activity

Supplies: cups, quart jar with lid, M&Ms or Skittles, and fun sized candy bars. Prep ahead without kids: fill a jar with 3 candy bars and then fill it to the top with small candies. Put the lid on and shake. Add more M&Ms to fill the jar to brim. Take everything out of the jar. Set aside the candy bars and divide M&Ms in cups (1/ family member). Now you are ready!

Discuss the passage and the "Family Questions" (younger kids- Deut.6: 5-6 only). Say: "Even though God wants us to love Him with all our heart, mind, and strength, sometimes we let other things become more important. These candy bars represent God and time with Him. The small candies represent all the things we often make more important than God." Pour the small candies (not candy bars) into the jar and share ways that you love to spend your time. Now add the candy bars and put on the lid. Everything will not fit! Try again, but put the candy bars, representing God and time we spend with Him, in first. Add small candies. Everything fits. We love and respect God by putting Him first. Pray together.

Small Group Discussion

- Moses is a reminder that spiritual leadership is hard and sometimes heartbreaking. It is accompanied by adversity and opposition. Spiritual leadership may be hard and heartbreaking, but it is also hopeful because God is our anchor. Moses' reward was not the peoples' admiration, and not even the Promised Land. God was his reward.
- What promises should we trust?
- What command should we obey?
- What sin should we avoid?
- What lessons do we learn from the twelve spies?
- Will you decide to develop an unwavering trust and confidence in the Lord like Caleb and Joshua?

March 26-April 1

This Week:

CONQUERING THE LAND

Before passing away on Mount Nebo, Moses passes on leadership of the Israelite people to Joshua. Joshua is commanded by God to be strong and courageous as he leads the people. He is also cautioned to be careful to do according to all the law that Moses commanded (Joshua 1:7). Joshua's task is a daunting one -- to lead the Israelite people in clearing out all the inhabitants of Canaan so the nation of Israel can dwell in the land the Lord has chosen for them, set apart as His very own people. In doing so, they are to continue to follow the rules and commands God has given for His people. Unfortunately, as we will see, the Israelites fall short in both of these pursuits.

The beginning of the book of Joshua marks the beginning of the third era of Old Testament history, the **CONQUEST**. It is so named because that is exactly what the Israelites are supposed to do: conquer the Promised Land. That task begins by crossing the Jordan River and conquering the city of Jericho. Both of those tasks provide powerful displays of the Lord's continued leading, caring, and guiding of the Israelite people.

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DEUT.
11, 34

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JOSHUA
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JOSHUA
3-4

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JOSHUA
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JOSHUA
6

9 ERAS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

CREATION

Gen. 1-11

PATRIARCHS

Gen. 12-50

EXODUS

*Exodus-
Deuteronomy*

CONQUEST

Joshua

JUDGES

Judges

KINGDOM

*Samuels, Kings,
Chronicles*

EXILE

Kings

RETURN

*Ezra, Nehemiah,
Esther*

SILENCE

*400 years of
silence*

CONQUEST

JORDAN | JERICO | CONQUEST | DOMINION

Family Devotional**Joshua 1:1-10****FAMILY INGREDIENT
SERVING**

In our passage today, Moses has died and God gives Joshua his marching orders, with some promises to believe in faith. His people will possess the Promised Land. He will never leave Joshua. God encourages him to be courageous and not forget the Law, but to study it day and night. This will make him a successful leader. He does not need to be terrified or discouraged. Joshua has a choice to make. Will he answer God's call? Joshua hears what needs to be done and responds with a resounding "Yes!" God challenges us in the same way: always be ready for whatever He calls us to do in service to Him. We are to look at a situation and seek God for His answer, asking ourselves, "What needs to be done?" This is the essence of the family ingredient of Serving. When we pray and see God's solution to a need, we can move forward in serving, with confidence, knowing that God's promises to Joshua are also true for us.

Family Questions

- What fears do you think Joshua had?
- Who would be with him wherever he went? How would that be encouraging?
- List some truths that God told Joshua.
- One of the commands God gave Joshua is to not let this Book of the Law depart from his mouth. What is the "Book of the Law" and what is Joshua to do with it day and night?
- When are we taking time to read the Bible daily? Make a plan together.

Family Activity

Activity 1: Choose a room in your house and ask the question, "What needs to be done?" Make a short list of what could be done to straighten up the room and then complete it as a family. Use the same question when fixing dinner or cleaning. Let everyone work together until the task is finished.

Activity 2: Brainstorm serving opportunities outside of the home and ask the same question, "What needs to be done?" You might take cookies to someone who is discouraged or help to clean up someone's yard. Be on the lookout for service opportunities that are age appropriate for your family. Watch for opportunities to serve each day and share together later. Pray that God would help you to see others' needs and do what needs to be done.

Small Group Discussion

- Joshua 1 must be read in its emotional context. Moses is not allowed into the Promised Land because he disobeyed God. He allowed the pressure of those following him to get to him and he acted in unbelief. He commissioned Joshua to carry on. Now God comes to Joshua personally to give him an exposition on courage. Is there an example to follow?
- God reaches out and grabs Joshua (and us) by the shoulders and gives us a fourfold description of courage.
 1. Courage rests upon a clear assignment of God (Joshua 1:1-4).
 2. Courage rests upon the assurance of God's presence (Joshua 1:5, 9).
 3. Courage rests upon focused determination (Joshua 1:6-7, 9).
 4. Courage is anchored by the Word of God (Joshua 1:7-8).
- As you look at God's fourfold description of courage, what or where is God asking you to be a courageous leader for Him?

April 2-8

This Week:

Ai

The Lord commanded the Israelite people not to keep any of the "devoted things" from Jericho for themselves. Instead, all the items of gold, silver, bronze, and iron were to be taken into the treasury of the Lord. This fact becomes very important for understanding the next scene in the book of Joshua. Before moving forward in their mission to remove all the inhabitants of Canaan, what follows the fall of Jericho is a powerful reminder of God's desire for His people's obedience.

After the Lord brought the Israelites a resounding victory at Jericho, Joshua and his army set their sights on a much smaller city, Ai. Joshua is so confident in their ability to defeat the people of Ai that he decides to only send a couple thousand of his soldiers to attack. What ensues is an important lesson for the people of Israel. They are overpowered by the small city. The Lord does so because one man, Achan, has kept for himself some of the devoted things of Jericho. The Israelites learn -- as do we -- that obedience is important to the Lord, that sin cannot remain hidden forever, and that the effects of one person's sin can reach into the lives of others.

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JOSHUA
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JOSHUA
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JOSHUA
9-10

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JOSHUA
11-12

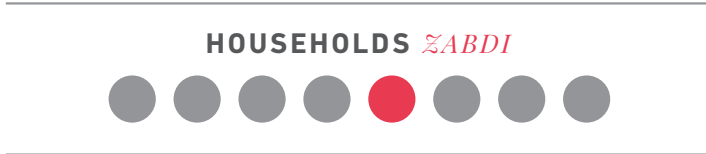
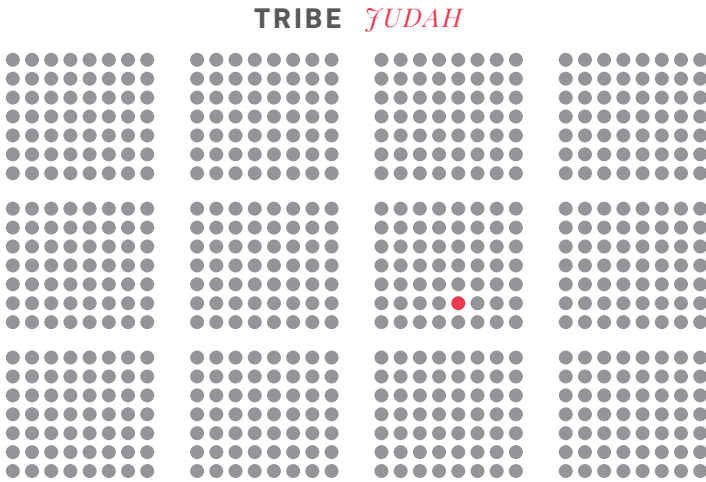
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JOSHUA
13-14

OLD TESTAMENT VISUALIZED

UNCOVERING THE SIN OF ACHAN

This chart visualizes the uncovering of Achan's sin as described in Joshua 7:10-26.



CONQUEST

JORDAN | JERICO | CONQUEST | DOMINION

Family Devotional**Joshua 10:5-15****FAMILY INGREDIENT**
KNOWING GOD

As the Israelites set about taking the Promised Land, they learn that obedience is required and that sin's effects are far reaching. They also learn the greatness of God, His power, and His faithfulness, if they remain faithful. Nothing can stand against the Lord. In our passage today, a neighboring people group, the Gibeonites, is attacked. They cry out to the Israelites for help. Joshua prays and receives God's plan, full of promises: He has given the enemy into their hands; they do not need to be afraid. As the battle begins, God hurls hailstones from the sky and throws the enemy into confusion. He also causes the sun to stand still, thereby giving the Israelites time to win the battle. The Israelites are in awe of the Lord. This demonstrates how the family ingredient of Knowing God grows. We, too, have many amazing miracles that show us God's power and goodness. God's promises and power are eternal. His commandments are unchanging. We can teach our children to know and trust Him.

Family Questions

- What did God tell Joshua before the battle began? Do you think Joshua believed Him?
- What did God do to help the Israelites win the battle? How was God able to do all those things?
- What are some things you see in creation that remind you of God's power?
- Has there ever been a time when you were afraid? Who could help you?
- Have there been times when you know that God worked in a powerful way on behalf of your family or someone you know?

Family Activity

Kids App: "Waters Part & Walls Fall"

Brainstorm a list of words that are true about God (use pictures or symbols with younger kids).

Supplies: muffin tin, milk, food coloring, cotton swabs, white bread, and toaster.

Preparation: Fill muffin cups with 1/4 cup of milk and add food coloring to them, making a variety of colors. Let each family member choose their favorite describing word or symbol for God. Dip the cotton swab in colored milk and write a word or symbol on the bread. Younger children may need help. Toast the bread and the word should show up clearly. Add jelly or honey and enjoy a snack. Pray and tell God how powerful and loving He is.

Small Group Discussion

- Is there a principle to follow?
- Is there a sin to avoid?
- In this week's reading, we see both the results of disobedience and the grace of God. After Israel experiences the loss at Ai and repents of their greed at Jericho, God leads Israel back up to Ai with a promise, just like the one He gave at Jericho: a second chance at obedience stemming from a repentant heart. God's response to a repentant heart is always grace.
- Where have you sought fulfillment outside of the will of God? Take heart and repent, fellow sinner, knowing that He who poured out such abundant grace on Israel will also pour it out on you who have become His child through faith in Jesus Christ. How does repentance lead to deeper obedience?

April 9-15

This Week:

DIVIDING THE LAND

As we continue, it is important to remember where we have come from to this point. God chose Abraham and his descendants to be His chosen people. After spending years in slavery to the Egyptians, God used Moses to lead the people out of their bondage. They spent a generation in the desert, where they received God's Law and awaited their time to enter the Promised Land, Canaan. After crossing the Jordan River and conquering the city of Jericho, they had a small hiccup at Ai due to the sin of one man, Achan. They then set about their God-commanded task to drive the inhabitants of Canaan out of the land.

Our reading begins this week after the Israelites have done a good, though incomplete, job of clearing the Promised Land of all its peoples. From here, Joshua divides the land of Canaan among the twelve tribes of Israel. Though Joshua 15-21 is not the most engaging portion of the Old Testament, it is incredibly important within the story of the Israelites. This moment -- moving into the land promised by God -- is one of great significance to the Israelite people. God is showing Himself, yet again, to be faithful in fulfilling His promises. In response to God's faithfulness in giving the people their own land to call home, the book ends with an aging Joshua imploring the Israelite leaders and people to, "choose this day who you will serve" either the Lord who is faithful or the false and foreign gods of the people who live around them. For the time being, the Israelite people proclaim, "We will serve the Lord." (Joshua 24:15)

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JOSHUA
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JOSHUA
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JOSHUA
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JOSHUA
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JOSHUA
24

OLD TESTAMENT VISUALIZED

DIVIDING THE TRIBES OF ISRAEL

Below is an approximation of how Canaan -- the Promised Land -- was divided among the twelve tribes of Israel.



CONQUEST

JORDAN | JERICO | CONQUEST | DOMINION

Family Devotional**Joshua 22:1-6, 10-16,
21-27****FAMILY INGREDIENT****FELLOWSHIP OF BELIEVERS**

God promises a portion of land to each of the twelve tribes. Three tribes receive their land east of the Jordan River before the other tribes. Joshua commands them to help the other nine tribes conquer their land before settling in their own property. They obey. At the end of their conquest, Joshua warns all the tribes to continue to follow the Lord. When the three tribes east of the river return home, they build a large altar. The other tribes fear that they built the altar to worship other gods, and therefore confront them. Thankfully, the altar is not intended for evil, but as a reminder for the twelve tribes to be united in worshiping the Lord. We, as a church, are commanded to help one another. This passage illustrates the family ingredient of the Fellowship of Believers. We are to help one another, encourage one another, and even warn one another of sin. This is how the body of Christ is to function.

Family Questions

- Why do you think the three tribes chose to help the other nine tribes?
- What was Joshua's warning?
- What did the three tribes do when they returned home?
- What did the tribes west of the Jordan River fear? Was it a good thing that they asked questions about the altar?
- Were the three tribes turning away from God?
- Could there ever be a time that you should warn a friend about something that they are doing? Why or why not? What would be a helpful way to do that? What might be a harmful way to do that?

Family Activity

Activity 1: Helping Hands Poster. Supplies: poster board and liquid watercolor paint. Paint handprints on the poster and brainstorm ways to help others. When dry, write the ideas on the handprints, and make plans for how to accomplish them. Discuss your progress and pray daily.

Activity 2: Children sometimes have a difficult time forming friendships. It is often hard to identify reasons. To start conversation, watch Youtube video, "How to Lose All Your Friends" by Suzanne Halsey Goeden.

Activity 3 (older kids): Supplies: milkshakes, sweet & sour candy. Secretly add one of each candy to the shakes. Say, "When we see our friends making unwise decisions, sometimes God calls us to warn them." Enjoy the shakes while discussing harmful behaviors that our friends might do, especially as they grow older. "What could a good friend do to warn their friend?" Finding sweet and sour candies is a good reminder to approach friends with kindness. Pray for any situations already occurring, asking God for His guidance.

Small Group Discussion

- Joshua 21:43 is an astonishing summary of the book: "Thus the Lord gave to Israel all the land that he swore to give to their fathers. And they took possession of it, and they settled there." The key words in this sentence -- give and gave -- are repeated throughout the book. By giving the land, the Lord shows us the kind of salvation He offers. By keeping His covenant promises through Joshua, the Lord shows us the kind of Savior He provides. After reading Joshua, is there a promise to claim? Is there a sin to avoid?



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